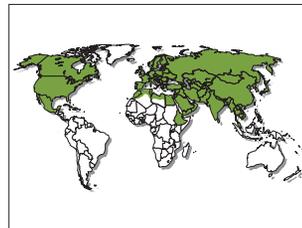


POSITION STATEMENT OF THE IUCN CAPRINAE SPECIALIST GROUP ON TROPHY HUNTING



The main goal of the IUCN Caprinae Specialist Group is the conservation of Caprinae. Because most threats to biodiversity originate from human activity, conservation biology involves a consideration of economic, social and political factors that affect the well-being of wild plants and animals. Hunting, and in particular trophy hunting, can play a major role in Caprinae conservation. In trophy hunting, the size of the animal killed, or some aspect of its morphology, provides a “score” that can be compared to those of other animals of the same taxon. Several organizations keep records of trophy scores. For some, the higher the score, the higher the personal value of the trophy and the higher the willingness to pay to obtain the trophy. Other trophy hunters simply prefer to hunt any large specimen of a given species.

For Caprinae, the horns are measured to score a trophy. Because most Caprinae are sexually dimorphic, with males larger than females, trophy hunting of Caprinae is almost always a selective hunt for large-horned males. In most species the horns grow through life, and trophy hunters are mostly interested in mature males. Species of the genera *Ovis* and *Capra* are particularly sought after because of the very large horns of mature males.

Trophy hunting usually generates substantial funds that could be used for conservation activities such as habitat protection, population monitoring, law enforcement and research or management programs. Equally importantly, the revenues from trophy hunting can provide a strong incentive for conservation or habitat protection by demonstrating the economic worth of Caprinae to local people.

Because they seek adult males, trophy hunters are unlikely to have a negative short-term impact on most healthy populations. It is unlikely that trophy hunting of mature males will cause extinction. A population of Caprinae that produces mature males (aged 6–12 years, depending on the species) and therefore provides trophy hunting opportunities, is likely reasonably healthy. Because trophy hunting is incompatible with poaching or habitat destruction, several of the goals of trophy-hunting programs are shared with the goals of the Caprinae Specialist Group. Other specialist groups may not have such convergent goals, because for some taxa (for example large carnivores) trophy hunting is not as selective for mature males, or has negative consequences by disrupting the social structure.

Biologists and trophy hunters often disagree about the role of trophy individuals in a population. The argument that trophy males are past their prime, and therefore are surplus animals, is invalid. On the contrary, trophy hunters selectively target those males that would be responsible for much of the reproduction in an un hunted population. Large males have high reproductive success because they outcompete other males for access to estrous females. Trophy hunting thus selects against the best (or “fittest”, in a Darwinian sense) males in a population, but little is known about its long-term genetic or ecological effects. If the genetic make-up of successful males in a trophy-hunted population is different from that in a non-hunted population, the population gene pool will be altered.

Because of its ecological, social and economic implications, trophy hunting is a major interest of the IUCN Caprinae Specialist Group. It is therefore important to explicitly present the CSG’s position on this important and complex issue.

The IUCN Caprinae Specialist Group recognizes that under appropriate management conditions, trophy hunting can be a valid component of many conservation programs for Caprinae and their habitat. We **support** trophy hunting programs that satisfy the following criteria:

- A science-based harvest plan to limit as much as possible the difference in age structure between trophy-hunted and unhunted populations. Harvest of trophy males must be limited, target the oldest age classes and allow for a certain number of mature males to die of natural causes. Present knowledge is insufficient to estimate the proportion of males that must not be harvested to avoid negative long-term ecological or genetic consequences for the population. Excessive levels of trophy hunting may lead to selection for small horns, or alter the life-history strategy of male Caprinae, possibly decreasing subadult survival.
- A conservation-oriented use of the funds generated by trophy hunting. We **do not support** trophy hunting of Caprinae for purely economic goals. We **support** programs that can demonstrate that a substantial part of the revenues is used to foster effective conservation, habitat protection, population monitoring, environmental education, or research. We **support** community-based trophy hunting programs where funds are channeled into local conservation programs.

We **do not accept** the following practices that are sometimes associated with trophy hunting:

- Trophy hunting of Caprinae for purely economic goals where revenues go into general government funds or are absorbed only by International outfitters.
- Alienation of local communities to favor foreign trophy hunters. Support of local communities is essential for the success of conservation programs.
- Predator control with the sole goal of increasing the availability of trophy males.
- Artificial feeding to increase horn growth.
- Selective hunting with the goal of affecting horn morphology, or artificial introductions of individuals thought to have genetically larger horns.
- Hunting regulations which allow outfitters to overharvest an area and then move to different areas.

Link to the position statement on the website of the IUCN/SSC – Caprinae Specialist Group: <http://pages.usherbrooke.ca/mfesta/iucnwork.htm>



*To hunt a Rocky Mountain Goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) in its own terrain requires a hunter to be almost as surefooted as these magnificent game animals. (Photo: Horst Niesters)*